The atmosphere or overall feeling that comes through when you read a story is called the **mood**. Authors create a particular mood by the way they describe the setting or by the way they present the feelings of the characters.

For example, read the following paragraph.

> The lonely farmhouse was located at the end of a long, winding dirt road. It had been built in the middle of a wide, open plain. There were no neighbors for miles around and probably few, if any, people ever chanced to come this way. In such an out-of-the-way spot, it was no wonder that the house was uninhabited.

The setting described above is lonely and empty. You get a feeling of loneliness when you read it and so the mood of this paragraph is one of loneliness.

Now read the next paragraph.

> The storm came suddenly. Ian knew he was in trouble. His small boat could not take a bad beating from the wind and waves. The rain was already falling heavily, and from the looks of the ever-darkening sky, he knew he did not have much time. He had to make it to shore fast.

In this paragraph, the mood is one of anxiety and suspense. You get a sense of anxiety from Ian's feelings. He knows that he is in trouble, and he is afraid of what the storm can do to him and his boat. There is also suspense because you do not know if he can reach safety in time.

Now look at the following paragraph.

> And as thousands had done before them, the Simpsons gathered up their few belongings. They left the South for the golden opportunity of the North. They were all eager to start a new life in the big city.

The mood here is one of hope and eagerness on the part of the Simpsons. They know the bad conditions they are leaving behind, but they do not know the ones they will have to face up North. At this point, they see the North as a kind of Promised Land where they will be able to start life again.

Sensing the mood of a story will deepen your involvement in it and will make your reading more enjoyable.
Read each paragraph and answer the question that follows it. Circle your answer.

1. The darkness accompanied a cold wind that sent shivers through the girl. Herman turned another corner. Sara Jane followed. Abandoned buildings loomed on both sides of the street. Here, crime accompanied the darkness, and even the toughest police officers dreaded a beat in this area.

   The mood established by this paragraph is one of
   a. hope.
   b. quiet humor.
   c. darkness and fear.
   d. sadness.

2. A warm, gentle, tropical breeze rustled through the palm trees. The peacocks were resting in the shade of the trees. In the distance, a bell bird started singing his song. “Ding-dong, ding-dong.” The song went on and on. Soon John slept.

   The mood established by this paragraph is one of
   a. loneliness.
   b. anxiety.
   c. relief.
   d. peace.

3. Charlie walked off the basketball court, beaming brightly. His final shot, a three-pointer, had won the game for the team.

   The mood established by this paragraph is one of
   a. joy.
   b. hope.
   c. humor.
   d. sadness.

4. For hours they had stood in the damp November chill just to get a glimpse of the president’s casket as it was carried past on that final journey, the journey to Arlington. The sounds of the mournful drums grew louder, and they knew that it would be here any moment now. But when it finally passed, they could see only a blur through the tears in their eyes.

   The mood established by this paragraph is one of
   a. fear.
   b. sadness.
   c. despair.
   d. relief.